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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/RAMCHAND/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/27/2018
TAGS: KWBG PHUM ASEC IS PBTS PTER
SUBJECT: YESHA COUNCIL EXPANDING

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. The Yesha Council is expanding to include one representative from each settlement plus other settler leaders, according to Yesha Council Chairman Dani Dayan. The new council will have approximately 200 delegates who will convene in early spring. Dayan said the change is intended to make the Yesha Council more democratic, more accountable, and stronger. End summary.

From 17 representatives to 200

¶2. (C) Dayan told PolOffs that each settlement, regardless of size, will select one individual, for the expanded Yesha council. They will be joined by additional selected settler leaders for a total of 200. Gush Etzion Regional Council Chairman Shaul Goldstein (an elected member of the current Yesha Council) told Poloffs October 30 that some outposts will also have representation. Currently, 17 representatives -- some elected and some not elected -- sit on the Yesha Council. Dayan said the expanded council will elect the chairman and leadership positions. With an expanded board, Dayan said committees and sub-committees will be formed. He said the full, expanded council is expected to convene in early spring, and he expressed confidence of his own re-election as Yesha Council Chairman.

Accountability for violence and outposts

¶3. (C) Dayan admitted that many settlers have criticized the Yesha Council as an unrepresentative body because the leadership is mostly appointed, not elected. Dayan said expansion will make the council more democratic and unified, and he believes it will strengthen the Council. He said direct representation will make settler leaders more accountable for incidents of violence and illegal outpost activity. He acknowledged that settler violence has been higher than usual in recent months. He characterized it as an ""image problem"" that has ""stained our PR efforts,"" but said there have also been increased Palestinian provocations.

""Endless talking""

¶4. (C) Goldstein expressed doubt that the larger body would be more effective, saying it will only result in ""endless talking.""" He said the restructuring was meant to have happened two years ago in the wake of the Gaza evacuation, but never materialized.

WALLES

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